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IV. — *The “Continued Allegory” in the First Book of the Faery Queene.*

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SPENSER has not received from scholars the attention which has been given to the other great English poets. The so-called Spenserian Society has done almost nothing of the finer work which has characterized the Chaucer, Shakspeare, Shelley, and Browning Societies. Yet, if we may judge from certain signs of the times, there is reason to hope for an early revival of general interest in the father of poets; for as truly as Chaucer is the father of English poetry, Spenser is the father of English poets. There is as much to be done for Spenser as there was for any of the great names written above. Consider, for instance, how that rich field, the Allegory of the Faery Queene, has been neglected. Sir Walter Scott, reviewing Todd's Spenser, asks why it is that editors do not see the need of giving their chief attention to its interpretation. Only a few Spenserians have been more than half friendly to it. Most critics, finding it as difficult to cope with as one of Spenser's dragons, have counselled the reader to let it alone. The absurdity of advice which entirely ignores a main object of the poet, ought to be apparent, and moreover the allegory is a chief element in the greatness of the Faery Queene. I do not believe it was regarded with indifference in Elizabethan days; that it is so treated now, in spite of differences in taste, is a deplorable commentary on English scholarship.

The difficulties in seeking the solution and explanation of Spenser's allegory are alluring rather than discouraging. It is easy enough to fancy constellations in the heavens, and since there was no apparent design in the grouping of the stars, the Arab's constellation is as good as the Scandinavian's.

Ursa Major, Big Dipper, Charles' Wain, Septentriones,—one figure is as correct as the other. So it is easy to fancy allegories for any imaginative tale like the *Faery Queene*. Indeed, it has been said that in Tasso's early work the allegory was purely an ingenious afterthought, put in, or worked out, without a change in his poem. With Spenser the case was entirely different. He made the allegory a chief study from the first, and a right and a wrong, a true and a false, interpretation is possible. Picking out the allegory of the *Faery Queene*, then, is like trying to recover lost constellations; and if you do not find them, you at least have been gazing on the glory of the stars and into the depth of the heavens, so that you go away with a new sense of appreciation and love for the maker of it all. If the student ever bears in mind Ruskin's words, "The *Faery Queene* like Dante's *Paradise* is only half estimated, because few persons take the pains to think out its meaning. . . . No time devoted to profane literature will be better rewarded than that spent earnestly on Spenser," the search through Spenser's mazy labyrinth affords one of the best exercises for wit and judgment.

Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, which serves as a general introduction to the poem, recognizes the student's difficulties in the very first sentence.

"Sir, Knowing how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed, and this booke of mine, which I have entituled the *Faery Queene*, being a continued Allegorie, or darke conceit, I have thought good, as well for avoyding of jealous opinions and misconstructions, as also for your better light in reading thereof, (being so by you commanded) to discover unto you the generall intention and meaning, which in the whole course thereof I have fashioned, without expressing of any particular purposes, or by accidents, therein occasioned."

But the letter seems rather to stimulate than to satisfy curiosity. And undoubtedly the hints there given were more helpful to the Elizabethan than to later readers. Be that as it may, it is all we get from the poet or his contemporaries in the way of external comment; and in the mind of the allegory's author no further external comment is needed, as

one would think from these lines from the introduction to Book II. :

“Of Faerie Lond yet if he more inquire,
By certaine signes, here sett in sondry place,
He may it find : ne let him then admire,
But yield his sence to bee too blunt and bace,
That no'te without an hound fine footing trace.”

Now although the allegory may have been made designedly puzzling in the first place, and is now grown still more confusing, its solution is not hopeless. More than a hundred years ago, Upton regained many of its lost threads, and left his work with the conviction that he had made only a beginning. “Spenser,” he says, “in his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, tells us his poem is one continued allegory : Where therefore the moral allusion cannot be made apparent, we must seek, (as I imagine) for an historical allusion ; and always we must look for more than meets the eye or ear ; the words carrying one meaning with them and the secret sense another.” In later years, Scott and the elder Disraeli have given useful, though rather obvious hints as to the “secret sense,” and at least three attempts have been made to unfold the “continued allegory” of the First Book. The first of these, by Frank Howard, was published in “Notes and Queries,” 3d series, vol. 4th, p. 283. The second, by the distinguished Thomas Keightly, was published in “Notes and Queries,” 4th series, vol. 7th, p. 1. The third is given by Ruskin in “Stones of Venice,” vol. 3d, p. 225. The first two interpretations are incongruous, improbable, unnatural, and cumbersome ; they have never been accepted by scholars. Ruskin’s comment is characteristically interesting and is valuable so far as it goes.

No one, so far as I have been able to examine Spenseriana, has called attention to the remarkable allegory of the “Defender of Faith” running throughout the First Book of the Faery Queene. I wish to show how conspicuous it is, and the particular reason why so much is made of it. The allegory, both moral and historical, is an important one. It is, I believe, pre-eminently the “continued allegory” of the poem.

In the adventures of the Red Cross Knight in the First Book, there is not an incident which is not plainly marked with it. There are clues to it everywhere. It is obscure only as those large names on maps are the hardest to find. In some parts of the allegory, previously accepted explanations of details are used, for here and there single letters, as it were, have been noticed on the map, though the whole legend of which they form a part has not been spelled out before. In a paper like this, the allegory can only be given circumstantially. To unfold it in detail as Spenser does, the poem should be edited with that object in view. In explaining, I will follow Spenser's method by reserving the most striking features to the last.

Every one remembers the opening lines of the *Faery Queene* :

"A gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine,
Ycladd in mightie armes and silver shielde,
Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine,
The cruel markes of many a bloudy felde ;
Yet armes till that time did he never wield.

* * * * *

And on his brest a bloudie crosse he bore,
The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,
For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,
And dead as living ever him ador'd :
Upon his shield the like was also scor'd,
For soveraine hope, which in his helpe he had."

This armor, Spenser tells us, is that celestial panoply described by St. Paul in Ephesians, "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace ; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewithal ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked ; and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Notice that although St. Paul particularizes each piece of armor, Spenser, by generalizing all but one piece, thus gives

special emphasis to the shield of Faith :—twice in the first fourteen lines of the poem. It is according to Spenser's method to make much of particular pieces of armor. For example, it is by his shield that Prince Arthur overcomes Orgoglio in the eighth canto of the first book. The shield of Britomart is an allegorical symbol, and the shield of Scudamour (Scud d'amour) is made of signal importance in the tenth canto of the fourth book. Furthermore in the latter stanzas of the eleventh canto of the fifth book this same shield of the Red Cross Knight is plainly used as the symbol of the Christian faith. This is one of Spenser's "certain signs." Think for a moment of the ideas and sentiments which cluster about the shield ! More than any other piece of armor it was something to be defended to the uttermost. The loss of it brought the deepest disgrace. "Come home with your shield, or on it" was the parting injunction of the Spartan mother. The shield of Faith proves to be the Knight's Defence and care in a peculiar sense, and he is the Defender of Faith as truly as he is the Defender of Una, or Truth.

Though Spenser usually moves with abundant leisure, he loses no time in opening the first book. No sooner are the knight and lady before us than "the day with clouds was suddeine overcast" and "an hideous storme" drives them to take refuge in the Wood of Error; there after wandering the labyrinth about they come to the den of the Dragon Error. To my mind this tempest represents the beginning of the Reformation. Certainly all agree on interpretation of references to the early Reformation in stanzas immediately following. At that time when old trusted supports were withdrawn and the very foundations of Christianity seemed crumbling, faith was tried as never before. Even with Una and the Dwarf, or Truth and Prudence, for guides, it was impossible for the Christian Knight to avoid all paths of error. But when error takes the substantial form of a Dragon the Knight can attack it and aims a good stout blow at the monster.

"Much daunted with that dint her sence was dazd ;
 Yet kindling rage her selfe she gathered round,
 And all attonce her beastly body raizd
 With doubled forces high above the ground :
 Tho wrapping up her wrethed sterne arownd,
 Lept fierce upon his shield, and her huge traine
 All suddenly about his body wound,
 That hand or foot to stirre he strove in vaine :
 God helpe the man so wrapt in Errours endlesse traine.

"His lady sad to see his sore constraint,
 Cried out, Now now Sir Knight, shew what ye bee,
 Add faith unto your force, and be not faint :
 Strangle her, else she sure will strangle thee.
 That when he heard, in great perplexitie,
 His gall did grate for grieve and high disdaine,
 And knitting all his force got one hand free,
 Wherewith he grypt her gorge with so great paine,
 That soone to loose her wicked bands did her constraine."

Notice that it is the shield of faith which Error attacks, and would wrest away, and "her huge traine all suddenly about his body wound" reminds one of St. Paul again : not "having your loins girt about with truth," but with error. And as his faith is attacked, so it is his faith which Una seeks to strengthen, —

"Add faith unto your force, and be not faint :
 Strangle her, else she sure will strangle thee."

Then after no easy struggle with that "sword of the Spirit which is the word of God," he

"Stroke at her with more than manly force
 That from her body full of filthie sin
 He raft her hateful head without remorse."

Though the Red Cross Knight has shown himself "well worthie of that armory," they are still in the wood of error, but they are now conscious of it. Spenser teaches us that even out of error there is a "plaine beaten path," but it is a direct retreat.

Without the interval of a single stanza Spenser passes from this adventure to a more subtle trial of faith.

“At length they chaunst to meet upon the way
An aged sire, in long blacke weedes yclad
His feete all bare, his beard all hoarie gray,
And by his belt his book he hanging had ;
Sober he seemde, and very sagely sad.”

This holy hermit is Archimago, representing hypocrisy in the moral allegory, and the subtle intrigue and trickery of the Roman Catholics in the historical allegory. It is not strange that faith is credulous and the eye of truth deceived, since

“Neither man nor angel can discern
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
Invisible except to God alone.”

Since the day is spent they accept his proffered hospitality, and enter that never-to-be-forgotten home of Hypocrisy.

“A little lowly hermitage it was,
Down in a dale, hard by a forests side,
Far from resort of people, that did pass
In travell to and froe : a little wyde
There was a holy chappell edifyde.”

While his guests are sleeping Archimago with dreams and delusions of sense attacks the Knight's faith in the purity of Una,—the Christian's faith in the purity of truth itself. But even in dreams the Red Cross Knight would not in a single thought do Una wrong.

“When those accursed messengers of hell,
That feigning dreame, and that faire-forged spright,
Came to their wicked maister, and gan tell
Their booteless paines, and ill-succeeding night :
Who all in rage to see his skilfull might
Deluded so, gan threaten hellish paine
And sad Proserpines wrath, them to affright,
But, when he saw his threatening was but vaine,
He cast about, and searcht his baleful bookes again.”

He attacks his waking senses with a still more fiendish plot than any tried, and the delusion of the arch-magician is triumphant. The Knight's faith in Una, in the heavenly truth, is overcome, and convinced of her utter baseness, he spurs away deserting her. It will be well for future understanding of the allegory to remember that Una is veiled, and the Knight has never seen the real face of Una.

Not long has he ridden before another test of faith begins.

"Still flying from his thoughts and gealous feare,
At last him chaunst to meet upon the way
A faithless Sarazin all arm'd to point,
In whose great shield was writ with letters gay
Sans foy : full large of limbs and every joint
He was, and cared not for God or man a point.

"Hee had a faire companion of his way,
A goodly lady clad in scarlot red,
Purfled with gold and pearle of rich assay,
And like a Persian mitre on her hed
Shee wore, with crowns and owches garnished,
The which her lavish lovers to her gave ;
Her wanton palfrey all was overspred
With tinsell trappings, woven like a wave,
Whose bridle rung with golden bells and bosses brave."

So the Red Cross Knight meets Sansfoy, the faithless, the infidel, and Duessa, the opposite of Una, falsehood as opposed to truth. She typifies the papal church, with scarlet robes, and Persian mitre, and gifts of lavish lovers, contrasted with the spotless and sober simplicity of the reformed church. The Defender of Faith at once meets the attack of the Defender of Faithlessness shield to shield.

"The flashing fier flies,
As from a forge out of their burning shields,
And streams of purple blood new dyes the verdant fields."

"Curse on that Cross, (quoth then the Sazarin,)
That keeps thy body from the bitter fit ;

Dead long ygoe I wote thou haddest bin,
 Had not that charme from thee forwarned it :
 But yet I warne thee now assured sitt,
 And hide thy head. Therewith upon his crest
 With rigor so outrageous he smitt,
 That a large share it hewd out of the rest,
 And glauncing down, his shield from blame him fairly blest.

“ Who, thereat wondrous wroth, the sleeping spark
 Of native virtue gan eftsoones revive ;
 And at his haughty helmet making mark,
 So hugely stroke that it the steel did rive,
 And cleft his head. He tumbling downe alive,
 With bloody mouth his mother earth did kis,
 Greeting his grave : his grudging ghost did strive
 With the fraile flesh ; at last it flitted is,
 Whither the soules doe fly of men that live amis.”

One cannot fail to notice the importance of the outward symbols of faith in this contest. The charmed shield with its red cross alone stands between the Knight and defeat, and even under the last fierce stroke of the infidel, aimed at his helmet, his very salvation, it fairly blesses him from blame. The Knight's blow returned upon the crest of Sansfoy proves it to be a helmet of destruction. What is the outcome of this combat ?

Bidding his Dwarf to bring away

“ The Sarazins shield, signe of the conqueroure,”

he rides on with Duessa, lending sympathetic and credulous attention to her long story made up of lies and lamentations. Her words deceive him, not only as to her nature but as to her name.

“ In this sad plight, friendlesse, unfortunate,
 Now miserable I Fidessa dwell,
 Craving of you in pittie of my state
 To do none ill, if please ye not do well,
 He in great passion all this while did dwell,
 * * * * *
 And said, Faire lady, hart of flint would rew
 The undeserved woes and sorrowes which ye shew.”

Thus Duessa, the deceitful, represents herself as Fidessa or true Faith. Henceforth for a time he believes himself to be the champion of faith, and his sincerity of purpose is not weakened as long as he does not know that Fidessa is the representative of false faith. Notice the names of the chief characters in this first book: Sansfoy is plainly *without faith*: Fidessa does not imply utter lack of faith, but *little faith*.

The next episode gives him opportunity to see what strait he is in by comparing the faith of Fradubio, or Brother Doubt, wavering between the true Fraelissa and the false witch Duessa, with his own conduct toward Una and the same Duessa. But it is not strange that all is lost upon him, since, as Upton says, “He stands amazed and performs nothing; for holiness, unassisted with truth and reason, is soon lost in amazement and silly wonderment.”

In the next adventure, —

“To sinfull house of Pride, Duessa
Guides the faithful Knight.”

It is

“A stately pallace built of squared bricke,
Which cunningly was without morter laid,
Whose wals were high, but nothing strong, nor thick,
And golden foile all over them displaid,
That purest skye with brightnesse they dismaid:
High lifted up were many loftie towres,
And goodly galleries far over laid,
Full of faire windowes and delightful bowres;
And on the top a diall told the timely houres.

“It was a goodly heape for to behould,
And spake the praises of the workman’s wit;
But full great pittie, that so faire a mould
Did on so weake foundation ever sit:
For on a sandie hill, that still did flit
And fall away, it mounted was full hie,
That every breath of heaven shook it:
And all the hinder parts, that few could spie,
Were ruinous and old but painted cunningly.”

Here we have that contrast between the real and the apparent which characterizes Spenser's representations of the church he hated, and here false faith and true defender are welcomed. The queen of this palace, whose kingdom is everywhere, is *Lucifera*, worldly or ostentatious pride; and Vanity is the usher who leads all subjects "to the lowest staire of her high throne." For one thing *Duessa* typifies that form of self-deceit which breeds self-righteousness. The meaning of the moral allegory is obvious. Since he forsook Truth, the Red Cross Knight has lost simplicity and nobility of character, and at the House of Pride we find him following in the train of the seven deadly sins, — Pride, Sloth, Gluttony, Lechery, Avarice, Envy, Wrath.

"And after all, upon the wagon beame
Rode Sathan with a smarting whip in hand."

Here again he has to do battle for his faith :

"An errant knight in armes yclod,
And heathnish shield, wherein with letters red
Was writt Sans joy they new arrived find :
Enflam'd with fury and fiers hardy-hed,
He seemed in hart to harbour thoughts unkind,
And nourish bloody vengeance in his bitter mind.

"Who, when the shamed shield of slaine Sans foy
He spied with that same Faery champions page,
Bewraying him, that did of late destroy
His eldest brother, burning all with rage
He to him leapt and that same envious gage
Of victor's glory from him snatcht away :
But th' elfin knight, which ought that warlike wage,
Disdained to loose the meed he wonne in fray,
And him recountring fierce, reskewd the noble pray.

"Therewith they gan to hurtlen greedily,
Redoubted battaile ready to darrayne,
And clash their shields and shake their swords on hy,
That with their sturre they troubled all the traine ;
Till that great Queene, upon eternall paine

Of high displeasure that ensewen might,
 Commanded them their fury to refraine ;
 And if that either to that shield had right,
 In equall lists they should the morrow next it fight."

In the moral allegory the attack of Sansjoy is the attack of joylessness or despondency upon the victim of pride, self-righteousness, and false faith ; and again a marked feature of the passage is the importance of the shield symbols. In the interval before the combat Duessa turns traitor, and warns Sansjoy that his opponent

"Beares a charmed shield,
 And eke enchanted armes that none can perce ;
 Ne none can wound the man, that does them wield."

In the fight which follows, the allegory still turns on the trial of faith. The lists are set with royal pomp. Lucifera and her court are in attendance on one side.

"On th' other side in all mens open vew
 Duessa placed is, and on a tree
 Sans foy his shield is hangd with bloudy hew ;
 Both those the lawrell girlonds to the victor dew.

"A shrilling trompett sownded from on hye,
 And unto battaill bad themselves addresse :
 Their shining shieldes about their wrestes they tye,
 And burning blades about their heades doe blesse,
 The instruments of wrath and heavinesse.
 With greedy force each other doth assayle,
 And strike so fiercely, that they do impresse
 Deep dinted furrows in the battred mayle :
 The yron walles to ward their blowes are weak and fraile.

"The Sarazin was stout and wondrous strong,
 And heaped blows like yron hammers great ;
 For after blood and vengeance he did long :
 The knight was fiers, and full of youthly heat,
 And doubled strokes, like dreaded thunders threat ;
 For all for praise and honor he did fight.
 Both stricken stryke, and beaten both doe beat,
 That from their shields forth flyeth fire light,
 And helmets hewen deepe shew marks of eithers might.

“At last the Paynim chaunst to cast his eye,
His suddain eye flaming with wrathful fyre,
Upon his brothers shield, which hong thereby :
Therewith redoubled was his raging yre,
And said Ah ! wretched sonne of wofull syre,
Doeest thou sit wayling by blacke Stygian lake,
Whylest here thy shield is hangd for victors hyre ?
And, sluggish german, doeest thy forces slake
To after-send his foe, that him may overtake ?

“Goe, caytive Elfe, him quickly overtake,
And soone redeeme from his long-wandering woe :
Goe, guiltie ghost, to him my message make,
That I his shield have quit from dying foe,
Therewith upon his crest he stroke him so,
That twise he reeled, readie twise to fall :
End of the doubtfull battaile deemed tho
The lookers on ; and lowd to him gan call
The false Duessa, Thine the shield, and I, and all !

“Soone as the Faerie heard his lady speake,
Out of his swowning dreame he gan awake ;
And quickning faith, that earst was woxen weake,
The creeping deadly cold away did shake ;
Tho mov’d with wrath, and shame, and ladies sake,
Of all attonce he cast aveng’d to be,
And with so’ exceeding furie at him strake,
That forced him to stoupe upon his knee :
Had he not stouped so, he should have cloven bee.

“And to him said, Goe, now, proud miscreant,
Thyselfe thy message do to german deare ;
Alone he, wandring, thee too long doth want :
Goe, say, his foe thy shield with his doth beare.
Therewith his heavie hand he high gan reare,
Him to have slaine ; when lo ! a darksome cloud
Upon him fell ; he no where doth appeare,
But vanisht is. The Elfe him calls alowd,
But answer none receives : the darkness him does shroud.

"Not all so satisfide, with greedie eye
 He sought, all round about, his thirstie blade
 To bathe in bloud of faithless enemy ;
 Who all that while lay hid in secret shade :
 He standes amazed how he thence should fade :
 At last the trumpets triumph sound on hie ;
 And running heralds humble homage made,
 Greeting him goodly with new victorie ;
 And to him brought the shield, the cause of enmitie."

The fight with Sansjoy is far fiercer than with Sansfoy, and an extended comparison proves most interesting ; but mark particularly the different result. The Defender of Faith at once met and overcame a bold Sansfoy, but Sansjoy finally eludes him through Duessa's intervention ; that is, in the House of Pride self-deceit still disguises the real cause of his despondency.

The only escape from Pride is through Prudence and Humility, which the Dwarf represents. So we find it is the Dwarf who points out to the Knight the real nature of the place where they are. But though the Knight hurries from the scene of his last adventure, he does not seek to escape the false Fidessa, whom he has championed.

"What man so wise, what earthly wit so ware,
 As to discry the crafty cunning traine,
 By which deceit doth maske in visour faire,
 And cast her colours dyed deep in graine,
 To seeme like truth, whose shape she well can faine,
 And fitting gestures to her purpose frame ;
 The guiltlesse man with guyle to entertaîne ?
 Great maistresse of her art was that false dame,
 The false Duessa, cloked with Fidessaes name."

She follows, seeks and finds the Red Cross Knight, no longer militant, reclining by the waters of idleness, "Disarmed all of yroncoted plate," and even that shield of faith thrown aside with its sacred symbol "for souveraine hope." Duessa has led him to the snares of pride once before, and she betrays him again.

“ Ere he could his armour on him dight,
Or get his shield, his monstrous enemy
With sturdie steps came stalking in his sight,
An hideous geant, horrible and hye.”

And the Red Cross Knight,

“ Disarmed, disgrast, and inwardly dismayde
And eke so faint in every joynt and vaine,
Through that fraile fountaine, which him feeble made,”

falls an easy victim to the monster Orgoglio. In allegory Orgoglio signifies braggart, carnal, or physical pride, and it is when the Knight is least active that he becomes his victim.

So, says Ruskin, “after Peter’s boast, came Peter’s sleeping, from weakness of the flesh, and then, last of all, Peter’s fall.” Orgoglio throws him into his deepest dungeon, and takes Duessa as his leman dear. And now for ninety days he groans in the dungeons of Orgoglio, before Prince Arthur and his faithful Una release him. In the bitterness of his despair all faith seems dead, and at the moment of rescue he cries to his deliverer :

“ O, who is that, which brings me happy choyce
Of death, that here lye dying every stound,
Yet live perforce in balefull darknesse bound?
For now three moones have changed thrice their hew,
And have been thrice hid underneath the ground,
Since I the heavens chearfull face did vew :
O welcome thou, that doest of death bring tydings trew.”

Perhaps this episode in Spenser contains no directly obvious hints, as in every other case in the history of the Knight, that this adventure also is a trial of faith. No such hint is needed at such an advanced point in the story, and the meaning of the whole ought to be clear. His ninety days in the dungeon were not wasted ; there was one long struggle between true and false faith in his thoughts continually. Let me quote here from a most appreciative, but, unfortunately, anonymous series of criticisms on the first book of the Faery

Queene, which were published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1835. "How could the Red Cross Knight have doubt of Una's innocence — after he had seen Duessa turning against him — and the whore of Orgoglio? Had she not left him to rot in a dungeon? And was it possible that he could have lain there three months in its hungry stench without his reason and his conscience telling him that he had been all along in the clutches of a fiend, and had forsaken an angel? His many miseries had indeed been all thrown away upon him, had he not groaned unceasingly in his imprisonment to think that his own fleshly frailties had not only laid himself low, but left that heavenly being without one to care for her in the haunted wilderness."

If anything more is needed to convince him of the nature of the true faith which he had deserted, and the false faith which had deserted him, it is given in that necessary but most loathsome passage in Spenser, the transformation of the seemingly fair Fidessa to the filthy hag Duessa, at Una's command. The Christian Knight — for spite of all weakness and error, he is still the Christian Knight — has no apology to make for past conduct, and so preserves a long silence from the very moment of his deliverance. All the more noteworthy, then, are the first words which Spenser allows us to hear from him only after a long interval. At Prince Arthur's praise of his lady love, the Faery Queene to whom he has been so faithful, the Knight's love for Una can be silent no longer.

"Thine, O then, said the gentle Redcrosse Knight,
Next to that ladies love, shall be the place,
O fairest virgin, full of heavenly light,
Whose wondrous faith exceeding earthly race,
Was firmest fixt in my extremest case."

But the Red Cross Knight is never a man of speech. It is important to notice, says Lowell, how very few are the words put in his mouth. "He never meant with words but swords to plead his right." And there still remains a subtle trial of faith where the weapons shall be those least familiar to him. To this the remainder of the famous ninth canto is devoted.

In the Cave of Despair, his shield does not ward off the poisoned points of such words as these :

“Why then dost thou, O man of sin, desire
 To draw thy dayes forth to their last degree?
 Is not the measure of thy sinfull hire
 High heaped up with huge iniquitie,
 Against the day of wrath, to burden thee?
 Is not enough that to this lady mild
 Thou falsed hast thy faith with perjurie,
 And sold thy selfe to serve Duessa vild,
 With whom in all abuse thou hast thy self defild?”

To all the arguments of Despair he replies with complete and forcible refutations, yet so is he “charmed with inchaunted rimes,” so is his faith deluded by sophistries that the man of deeds cannot recognize his victory in words.

“In which amazement when the miscreant
 Perceived him to waver weake and fraile,
 Whiles trembling horror did his conscience dant,
 And hellish anguish did his soule assaile ;

* * * * *

He to him raught a dagger sharpe and keene,
 And gave it him in hand : his hand did quake,
 And tremble like a leafe of aspin greene,
 And troubled bloud through his pale face was seene
 To come and goe with tidings from the heart,
 As it a running messenger had beene.
 At last resolv'd to work his finall smart,
 He lifted up his hand, that back againe did start.

“Which when as Una saw, through every vaine
 The crudled cold ran to her well of life,
 As in a swoone : but soone reliv'd againe,
 Out of his hand she snacht the cursed knife
 And threw it to the ground, enraged rife,
 And to him said ; Fie, fie, faint hearted knight,
 What meanest thou by this reprochfull strife?
 Is this the battaile which thou vaunst to fight
 With that fire mouthed dragon, horrible and bright?

"Come ; come away, fraile, feeble, fleshly wight,
 Ne let vaine words bewitch thy manly hart,
 Ne divelish thoughts dismay thy constant spright.
 In heavenly mercies hast thou not a part?
 Why shouldst thou then despeire, that chosen art?
 Where justice growes, there grows eke greater grace,
 The which doth quench the brond of hellish smart,
 And that accurst hand-writing doth deface.
 Arise, sir knight, arise, and leave this cursed place."

To fully appreciate the relation of this canto to the allegory one should read the whole of it. The despondency which, as Sansjoy, attacked him in the House of Pride has deepened to despair, and his failing faith is only saved by the reassurances of Una.

But the power which saves him should proceed from within ; the Knight must possess it even as Una does, before he can become the perfect knight able to cope with the great Dragon, and worthy to be the husband of the heavenly Una. To attain this higher development he follows the guidance of Una. From the Inferno of Orgoglio's Castle and the Purgatory of the Cave of Despair, we pass to the Paradise of the House of Holiness in the tenth canto. Here are passages of great significance in the interpretation of the allegory.

"By that which lately hapned, Una saw
 That this her knight was feeble, and too faint ;
 And all his sinews woxen weake and raw,
 Through long enprisonment, and hard constraint,
 Which he endured in his late restraint,
 That yet he was unfit for bloudy fight ;
 Therefore to cherish him with diets daint,
 She cast to bring him where he chearen might,
 Till he recovered had his late decayed plight."

They go to the House of Holiness, presided over by Dame Celia and her three daughters, Fidelia, Speranza, and Charissa. We must notice that here it is his faith which is first attended to.

Entered in, this most beautiful sight greets them :

“ Thus as they gan of sundry things devise,
 Loe two most goodly virgins came in place,
 Alinked arme in arme in lovely wise,
 With countenance demure, and modest grace,
 They numbered even steps and equall pace :
 Of which the eldest, that Fidelia hight,
 Like sunny beames threw from her christall face
 That could have dazd the rash beholders sight,
 And round about her head did shine like heavens light.

“ She was araied all in lilly white,
 And in her right hand bore a cup of gold,
 With wine and water fild up to the hight,
 In which a serpent did himselfe enfold,
 That horror made to all that did behold ;
 But she no whit did chaunge her constant mood :
 And in her other hand she fast did hold
 A booke, that was both signd and seald with blood :
 Wherein darke things were writ, hard to be understood.

* * * * *

“ Now when their wearie limbes with kindly rest,
 And bodies were refresht with due repast,
 Faire Una gan Fidelia faire request,
 To have her knight into her schoolehouse plaste,
 That of her heavenly learning he might taste,
 And heare the wisdom of her words divine.
 She graunted, and that knight so much agraste,
 That she him taught celestial discipline,
 And opened his dull eyes, that light mote in them shine.

“ And that her sacred booke, with blood ywrit,
 That none could read, except she did them teach,
 She unto him disclosed every whit ;
 And heavenly documents thereout did preach,
 That weaker wit of man could never reach ;
 Of God ; of grace ; of justice ; of free will ;
 That wonder was to heare her goodly speech :
 For she was able with her words to kill,
 And raise againe to life the hart that she did thrill.

"And when she list poure out her larger spright,
She would command the hasty Sunne to stay,
Or backward turne his course from heavens hight :
Sometimes great hostes of men she could dismay ;
Dry-shod to passe she parts the flouds in tway ;
And eke huge mountains from their native seat
She would command themselves to beare away,
And throw in raging sea with roaring threat.
Almightie God her gave such powre and puissance great.

"The faithfull knight now grew in little space,
By hearing her, and by her sisters lore,
To such perfection of all heavenly grace,"

that Fidelia could do little more for him, and Una could at last call him "her faithfull knight." Now we see one leading reason why so much is made of the need of strong faith and of the help of Fidelia. To no other personage in his entire poem has Spenser assigned such tremendous power, and no other can confer such power, and only by aid of such strength can the great Dragon be overcome. There is no fear hereafter that the intelligence of the champion shall be blinded to the discernment of the true and the false faith. So purified are those eyes which once saw Fidessa in Duessea, that those visions open to the eye of faith alone are revealed on the Mount of Contemplation. A holy father shows to him the joys which can be his only

"when thou famous victory hast won
And high emongst all knights hast hong thy shield, —"

that shield of faith which is to be to all knights an everlasting remembrance that faith without works is dead, but that by faith the true knight can overcome all enemies. Here occurs a most noteworthy passage. It is not until we approach the end of the allegory that we can see the beginning of it. "'Tis worth while," says Upton again, "to see with what great art our poet by degrees unravels his story: the poem opens with the Christian Knight; you see his character yet know not his name or lineage; some few hints are afterwards flung out; but in this canto you are fully sat-

isfied. (Spenser is very fond of this kind of suspense.)" Indeed to the Red Cross Knight himself his name and lineage are unknown, until here revealed by the holy father.

"Thou faire ymp, sprong out from English race,
 However now accompted elfins sonne,
 * * * * *
 There is ordained for thee a blessed end :
 For thou emongst those saints, whom thou dost see,
 Shall be a saint, and thine owne nations frend
 And patrone : thou Saint George shalt called bee,
 Saint George of mery England, the signe of victoree."

Before this, we have only in vague, conjectural way understood that the Red Cross Knight represented reformed England, but as "Saint George of mery England," the nationality of the hero is put forward as the great key to the solution of the historical part of the allegory. Saint George is England, or the line of sovereigns who represent England, and we recall that just at the beginning of the Reformation, upon this line of sovereigns had been conferred the title of Defender of the Faith ; but we shall come back to this.

In the progress of the poem we have finally come to the great scene of the Triumph of Faith, that combat which is the mission of the hero from the beginning, whereby the parents of Una are to be delivered from the great dragon. Abundant fault has been found with this eleventh canto, because of the inequality of the three days' combat between the Knight and the flying dragon "like a great hill" with a swingeing tail, "that of three furlongs did but little lack." It is an unequal combat, and only a Knight endued with the power which Fidelia confers could endure it. But even then there is a time near the end of the fight when his faith seems wellnigh lost, when with that swingeing tail, "that high trees overthrew and rocks in pieces tore," the dragon,

"With sharpe intended sting so rude him smot,
 That to the earth him drove, as stricken dead ;
 Ne living wight would have him life behot :
 The mortall sting his angry needle shot

Quite through his shield, and in his shoulder sead,
Where fast it stucke, ne would there out be got :
The griefs thereof him wondrous sore diseasd,
Ne might his rankling paine with patience be appeasd.

" But yet more mindfull of his honour deare
Then of the grievous smart, which did him wring,
From loathed soile he can him lightly reare,
And strove to loose the far infixed sting :
Which when in vaine he tryde with struggeling
Inflam'd with wrath, his raging blade he heft,
And strooke so strongly, that the knotty string
Of his huge taile he quite a sunder cleft ;
Five joints thereof he hewd, and but the stump him left.

" Hart cannot think what outrage, and what cries
With foule enfouldred smoake and flashing fire,
The hell-bred beast threw forth unto the skies,
That all was covered with darkenesse dire :
Then fraught with rancour, and engorged ire,
He cast at once him to avenge for all,
And gathering up himselfe out of the mire
With his uneven wings, did fiercely fall
Upon his sunne-bright shield, and gript it fast withall.

" Much was the man encombred with his hold,
In feare to lose his weapon in his paw,
Ne wist yet, how his talants to unfold ;
For harder was from Cerberus greedy jaw
To plucke a bonè, then from his cruell claw
To reave by strength the griped gage away :
Thrise he assayed it from his foot to draw,
And thrise in vaine to draw it did assay,
It booted nought to thinke to robbe him of his pray.

" Tho when he saw no power might prevaile,
His trusty sword he cald to his last aid,
Wherewith he fiercely did his foe assaile,
And double blows about him stoutly laid,
That glauncing fire out of the yron plaid ;

As sparckles from the andvile used to fly,
When heavy hammers on the wedge are swaid ;
There with at last he forst him to unty
One of his grasping feete, him to defend thereby.

“The other foot, fast fixed on his shield,
Whenas no strength nor stroks mote him constraine
To loose, ne yet the warlike pledge to yield,
He smot thereat with all his might and maine,
That nought so wondrous puissance might sustaine ;
Upon the joint the lucky steele did light,
And made such way, that hewd it quite in twaine ;
The paw yett missed not his minisht might
But hong still on the shield, as it at first was pight.”

He has defended the faith, and this time without another's aid ; one more struggle and the combat is ended. For the second time he is called the faithful Knight, but the Triumph of Faith is not yet complete. Before going further let us review certain points in the story.

In following out the allegory thus, one cannot feel that in a poem so saturated with allegories this one is only accidental. On the abstract side there is a lofty moral allegory, obvious enough without comment. But on the other side there is a historical or personal allegory which I believe to be the one “continued allegory.”

Henry VIII. came to the throne of England in 1509. Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church on All Saints' eve, 1517. Before the death of his elder brother, Henry VIII. had been educated for the Church. Deeply interested in the Renaissance he was still more interested in the Reformation. In the eleventh year of Henry's reign, in October, 1520, Luther published the most important work of the times, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church of God.” To this the royal theologian of England made reply with a book called “*Assertio septem sacramentorum adversus Martinum Lutherum.*” Regarding this book a recent Roman Catholic authority has written: “We know of none among the contemporary works which defend

the Church more filially and more warmly." For this enthusiastic defence, in the following year, 1521, Pope Leo X. conferred upon Henry the title "*Fidei Defensor*," and commanded all Christians so to address him. The title has been held by the sovereigns of England to this day. Pope Clement VII. confirmed the title. In 1527, Protestants were still persecuted in England, but Henry had resolved on the divorce, which led to such important results. In 1531 the king was acknowledged supreme head of the Church of England. In 1532 Anne Boleyn was crowned. In 1534 the Act of Supremacy was passed. From that time on, the former defender of the Roman faith became its oppressor and the champion and defender of the Protestant faith. Henceforward, except in the reign of Mary, whenever an English sovereign used the title "*Fidei Defensor*," the implied adjective was wholly different in significance from the one in the minds of Popes Leo X. and Clement VII.

Now let us see what use Spenser made of this material. St. George is *Fidei Defensor* not representing Henry VIII. alone, but rather the sovereigns of England, who bear the title of Defender of the Faith. With the just license of a patriotic poet, Spenser represents Una, or the cause of truth, as the peculiar charge of St. George, or England. At the beginning of the allegory the tempest of the Reformation drives the wandering pair into a labyrinth of Error, and there St. George fights sturdily against the Dragon Error in defence of Truth and Faith. Perhaps never in all Christian history has error been so common, so excusable. In spite of his theological training, or possibly because of it, to Henry VIII., as to nearly all Englishmen, the true faith seemed at first to be that which every Christian sought in the Church of Rome. Even Luther was a devoted Papist before he became a devoted Reformer.

Throughout the first of the allegory Una is veiled to her lover, and we see the significance of that puzzling mystery. The Dragon of the Wood of Error was a veritable dragon, and in attacking it, St. George was the champion of no false faith, but simply struggling with misunderstanding. Una

typifies the true Christian church on earth, long represented by Rome only, from this time forward represented, though still half concealed under her black stole, by the Protestant Church only. She is that heavenly truth which Luther sought first in Rome, which England at the beginning of the Reformation still seemed to see in Rome, and St. George is her champion. Archimago, symbol of papal influence, by lies and delusions, convinces St. George that his veiled Una is not truth, but foulest falsehood. The meaning is, that before England found its way out of the great tangle of error, it was led to turn from the true faith as St. George abandoned Una.

We next find the King of England defending the false faith, as St. George becomes the defender of Fidessa not knowing that she is the falsely faithless Duessa. But in this very change St. George gives the death blow to Sansfoy, the faithless, and becomes Fidessa's sole defender. In much the same way England sought to defend the island faith from injury by making Henry supreme head of the church in England, and thus gave a far heavier blow than was intended to the old established papal faith on the island. I think, too, that in the relations of Duessa and the Red Cross Knight there is much more than a shadowy fabric of allusion to Henry VIII.'s favor shown to certain less substantial phases of the Renaissance, which might well be represented by the oriental Duessa, the daughter of the emperor of the West, and the link between Constantinople and Rome. In the second volume of the "*Stones of Venice*," Ruskin forcibly shows how the spirit of the Renaissance proved injurious to both Protestant and Catholic. The succeeding career of the Red Cross Knight, his half-hearted, half-successful combat at the House of Pride, his disarming at the fountain of Sloth, and his long captivity in the dungeon of Orgoglio, shadow forth certain features of the history of England, near the middle of the sixteenth century. Orgoglio's "throwing the Red Cross Knight into a dungeon," writes Ruskin, "is a type of the captivity of true religion under the temporal power of corrupt churches, more especially of the Church of

Rome; and of its gradual wasting away in unknown places, while carnal pride has the pre-eminence over all things. . . . Prince Arthur, in whom, as Spenser himself tells us, is set forth generally magnificence, but who, as is shown by the choice of the hero's name, is more especially the magnificence, or literally, 'great doing,' of the Kingdom of England going forth with Truth attacks Orgoglio, or the Pride of Papacy, slays him; strips Duessa, or Falsehood, naked, and liberates the Red Cross Knight." The title *Fidei Defensor* conferred upon Henry VIII. was in one sense but an ornament of worldly pride. The assumption of the title of the Head of the Church was blasphemy and arrogance on the part of Henry VIII. Remember that Fidessa leads St. George to the House of Worldly Pride, and Henry's carnal pride, or pride of power which the giant Orgoglio typifies, may have seemed to Spenser the chief fault of his later years. At this point the more personal part of the allegory as pertaining to Henry VIII. comes to an end. If the poet's picture of the king seems too highly colored, remember that history has taught us to understand his character more clearly than was possible with Spenser. What Spenser saw was the coming of the gospel light apparently through his wisdom, not remarking that

"Love could teach a monarch to be wise,
And gospel light first dawned from Boleyn's eyes ;"

but Spenser's vision was obscured by many circumstances. Moreover, in a poem whose avowed object was the flattery of his daughter, we should not look for spots on the character of so great a king.

Before the adventure of St. George at the Cave of Despair, there is a bright passage like the hopeful reign of Edward before the dismal rule of Mary. But to all Protestants in England there came a period of despair in the reign of Bloody Mary, more intense than that typified in the famous ninth canto. Again the comforting joy and peace which glorifies the following canto in the story of the House of Holiness, may equally well express the feelings of the adherents of the true faith, at

the accession of Elizabeth. The beginning of her reign was really a new beginning for the Protestant faith in England. As St. George, worn with mistakes and struggles, was trained to the perfection of true faith and good offices in the calm of Celia's home, so young England, after its stormy trials of doubt and persecution, rested in the quiet of Elizabeth's kingdom and grew in the knowledge of the true faith. It was not until after the discipline of St. George, this real Re-formation and enlightenment of faith, that he could cope with the great dragon. The destruction of this monster of sin frees Una's parents from "eternal bondage." Precisely what this may signify is not wholly obvious. The writer in *Blackwood's*, before quoted, suggests that the parents of truth can be no other than the sacred Scriptures, the Old and New Testament, so long imprisoned in the brazen walls of ignorance and superstition, but wholly freed by the triumph of Reformation. Perhaps the deliverance of England from papal power by wars on the Continents and by the defeat of the Armada, may be nearer to the historical meaning. In the final canto, with the betrothal of St. George and Una, we have the final and indissoluble union of England with the true Christian faith of the Reformed Church.

It is not until this betrothal, that the veiled beauty of Una's face is revealed to her lover.

"As bright as doth the morning starre appeare
Out of the East with flaming lockes bedight,
To tell that dawning day is drawing neare,
And to the world does bring long wished light :
So faire and fresh that lady shewed herselfe in sight :

"So faire and fresh, as freshest flowre in May ;
For she has layd her mournfull stole aside,
And widow-like sad wimple throwne away,
Wherewith her heavenly beautie she did hide,
While on her weary journey she did ride ;
And on her now a garment she did weare
All lily white, withoutten spot or pride,
That seemed like silke and silver woven neare,
But neither silke nor silver therein did appeare.

"The blazing brightnesse of her beauties beame,
And glorious light of her sunshyny face,
To tell were as to strive against the streame :
My raged rimes are all too rude and bace
Her heavenly lineaments for to enchace.
Ne wonder ; for her own deare loved knight,
All were she dayly with himselfe in place,
Did wonder much at her celestiall sight
Oft had he seen her faire but never so faire dight,

"So fairely dight, when she in presence came,
She to her sire made humble reverence,
And bowed low, that her right well became,
And added grace unto her excellence :
Who with great wisdom and grave eloquence
Thus gan to say. But ere he thus had said,
With flying speede and seeming great pretense,
Came running in, much like a man dismaid
A messenger with letters, which his message said.

"All in the open hall amazed stood
At suddeinnesse of that unwary sight,
And wondred at his breathlesse hasty mood :
But he for naught would stay his passage right,
Till fast before the king he did alight ;
Where falling flat, great humblesse he did make
And kist the ground, whereon his foot was pight :
Then to his hands that writ he did betake,
Which he disclosing, read thus, as the paper spake ;

"To thee, most mighty King of Eden faire,
Her greeting sends in these sad lines address
The wofull daughter, and forsaken heire
Of that great Emperour of all the West ;
And bids thee be advised for the best,
Ere thou thy daughter linck in holy band
Of wedlocke to that new unknown guest :
For he already plighted his right hand
Unto another love, and to another land.

“To me sad mayd, or rather widow sad,
He was affiaunced long time before,
And sacred pledges he both gave and had,
False erraunt knight, infamous and forswore ;
Witnesse the burning altars which he swore,
And guilty heavens of his bold perjury,
Which though he hath polluted oft of yore,
Yet I to them for judgment just do fly,
And them conjure t’ avenge this shamefull injury.

“Therefore since mine he is, or free or bond,
Or false or trew, or living or else dead,
Withhold, O sovereign prince your hasty hond
From knitting league with him, I you aread ;
Ne weene my right with strength adowne to tread,
Through weaknesse of my widowhed, or woe ;
For truth is strong her rightfull cause to plead,
And shall finde friends, if need requireth soe.
So bids thee well to fare, thy neither friend nor foe.

FIDESSA.”

The messenger is Archimago, who always in Spenser is the agent of papal intrigue, and the letter, with all the boldness of a bull from the Vatican, represents the last overtures of Rome seeking to win England back to the old false faith.

This remarkable allegory of the Defender of the Faith runs without a single break through every incident of the legend of the Red Cross Knight. It excludes not one of the accepted interpretations of allegory in any part of the book, for it is Spenser’s custom to give a number of significations to the same incidents and characters. In history we can still catch glimpses of the interest if not enthusiasm with which the great addition to the royal title was generally received. England has had something like it in recent days ; but if the virtual self-assumption of the title of Empress of India gave matter for congratulation, how much deeper the significance of the title, Defender of the Faith, conferred by what England then believed to be the infallible authority of heaven. England’s right to this title after her complete change of face is to this

day hotly discussed and denied by Roman Catholics, and history gives us some understanding of contemporary opinion on the question. It would be strange indeed if so enthusiastic a Protestant as Spenser took no notice of it. Plainly he has given it unusual attention, and in philosophical allegory he has given its true interpretation, showing that the virgin queen could wear with increased confidence a divinely given title. He intimates that, independent of papal decree, the title belongs in a peculiar sense to the sovereigns of England from the earliest times, and later researches have established the antiquity of the title. And to the Queen as "Defender of the Faith" he dedicates his poem.